

Hill Scene

“There is just one possible hiding place left now, right?” Mario was sure, but asked for confirmation, “the guy is in the hill, most probably inside the hut.”

“Hm.” J simply nodded, thinking hard. All main changes in Jaime were starting to be embossed on him one day before that very “Grey Day” as people referred to that date.

“How do we get there without being noticed?” Mario partly knew but asked anyway.

Jaime was firm; he was already crafting a plan. “We have to go in the middle of the night.”

“That would be disadvantageous for us.” Mario always seemed to read Jaime’s mind when the two of them brainstormed together. “Let’s do it before dawn breaks, so we won’t need lanterns or anything.”

There were a few minutes of silent thoughts; the two of them had put all the puzzle pieces together and were ready to go find and probably talk to the abductor. They were sure they knew him and decided they would be able to convince him to release the girl and go somewhere else.

“We need to act fast.” Mario urged. “I suggest we don’t think it much, if we do we won’t know what to say once he finds himself discovered.”

“Alright, then. Let’s do it tonight, I mean, tomorrow at four a.m. Just the three of us.” Jaime was including me, knowing I could be of some use; however I sensed it was not precisely exciting. People are always afraid of such things, but doing nothing leaves them with the same

negative emotions. Yet a shiver went through my spine, something I hadn't felt with such force for a long time.

The three of us expected some danger, but were not sure what it would be. We went through our remaining of the day routines as if nothing happened; except for Jaime oiling the main door hinges when no one noticed, so that there were no more squeals when opening and closing it. For many reasons I was the least worried of the three, I knew when the time was right Jaime would come and wake me up.

He did so, obviously covering my mouth gently yet firmly so that I did not make any noises, and asking me to be silent and go with him. "It's time. Shhh. Just come."

We went through the then silent front door. Walked toward the road to the hill and noticed Mario was already there waiting, pale as a November moon. It was obvious he had been there for a long time, probably never able to catch any sleep, and therefore his state. We perceived he was nervous then.

"What is it?" Jaime whispered.

"I have a bad feeling about this, J." Trembling response.

"Yes, I also feel it." A five seconds pause was all Jaime needed to reconsider. "Do you want to change plans?"

"Too late for that, bud."

"I guess."

We did not stop walking anyway, so we were already in our way to meet the guy. The rest of the moistened and chirps-filled uphill walk was silent, except for a few covered sneezes and some rustling on the ground when Mario's bad leg stepped on highly unstable ground; all was only thought along with a few deep sighs. I noticed Mario turned a few times to Jaime as if he was about to ask something, but nothing came out of his mouth. Jaime patted his shoulder those few times in response, as if providing support for whatever worries Mario had.

Three hundred meters away from the entrance to the hut, right after the *Warning: Private Property* sign, we stopped for a split second and felt the hesitancy of our own response to the inaudible "this is the point of no return." However, Mario pushed a quick step indicating we were in. A couple dozen meters more the road changed from dirt to small rocks, not precisely gravel or pebbles, but rocks that filled the road as if it had needed some repairing. Stepping and walking on those rocks could make noises. Going around that stretch was probably worst due to the tall grass and spiky plants, aside from the fact that the vegetation didn't allow us see the ground clearly, it could be dangerous and perhaps even noisier than the pebbles. We stepped carefully, a few loose ones moved while others sank amid the surrounding ones; it was obvious it was not a good repairing job.

It happened then, right in the middle of the fixed road section, a pop came up from underneath. It wasn't precisely a pebble versus pebble pop noise. We reacted discovering that some type of device had been planted below the rocks, precisely to make it break and pop.

"What was that?" Mario was frightened.

"I... stepped on something," Jaime was frozen, "I'm sure there are more."